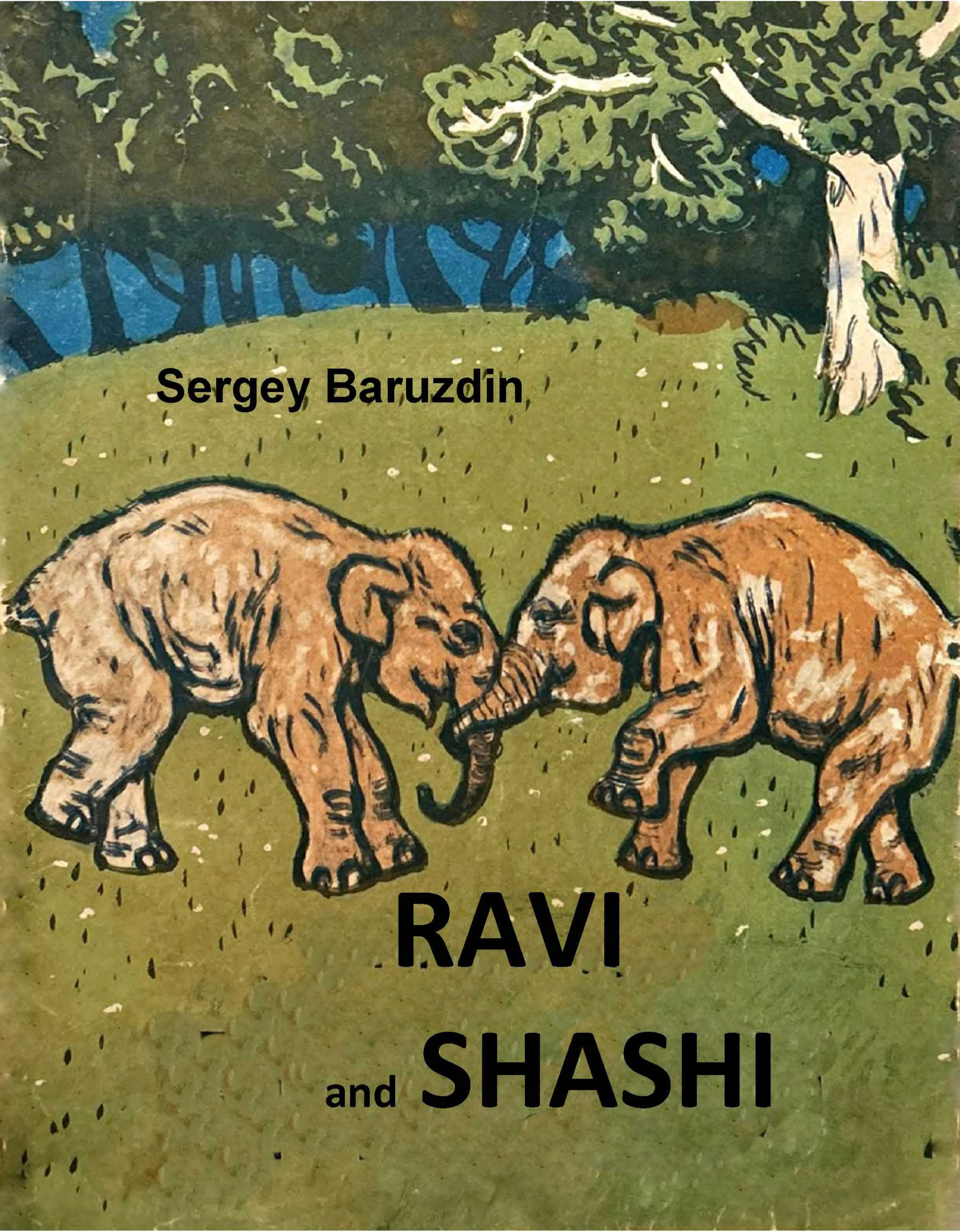


Sergey Baruzdin

RAVI and SHASHI

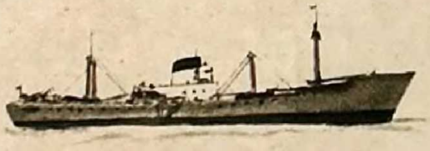
Sergey Baruzdin

Translation: Arvind Gupta

RAVI

and

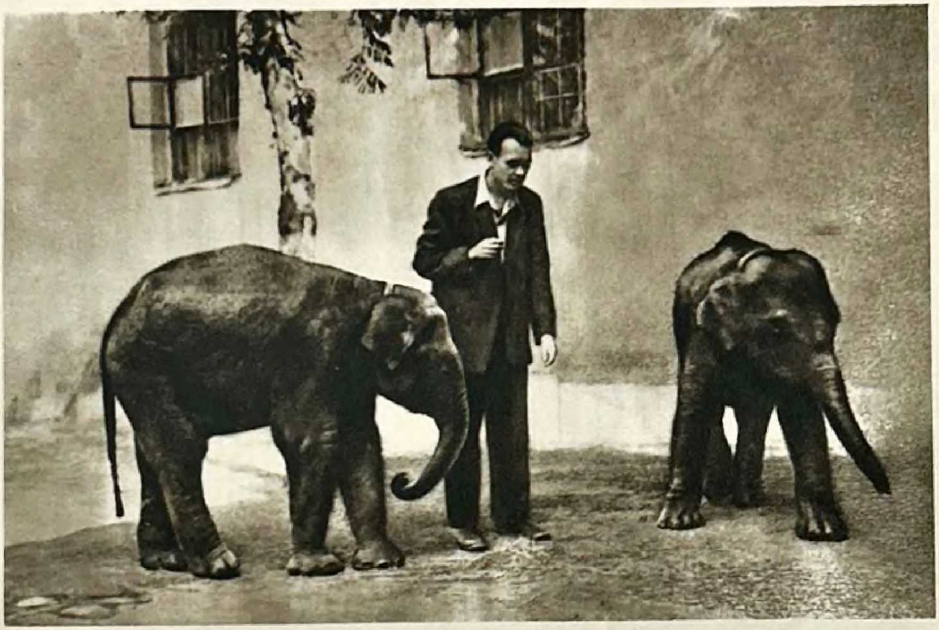
SHASHI



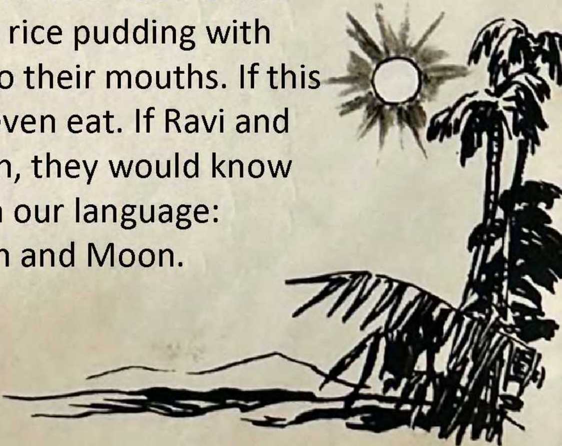
MINI PROGRESS & MINI RADUGA

С. БАРУЗДИН

РАВИ И ШАШИ



Ravi and Shashi are still children. Like all children, they sometimes play and jump, and sometimes start crying. And their food is also like that of small children, rice pudding with sugar and milk poured into their mouths. If this is not done, they cannot even eat. If Ravi and Shashi understood Russian, they would know what their names mean in our language: “Solntse” and “Luna” - Sun and Moon.



But they do not know their Russian names yet.

"Solntse! Solntse!" -- "Sun! Sun!" the children call Ravi, but he does not even move his trunk. "Luna! Luna!" -- "Moon! Moon!" the children call Shashi, but she does not even turn to look. "We must be making a mistake in recognizing them," the children say. "See, they look exactly like each other."

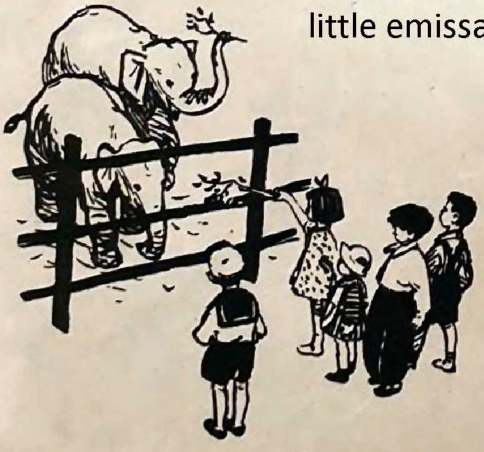
It is true that Ravi and Shashi looked quite similar. But they are not brother and sister - not even distant relatives.

Ravi and Shashi are baby elephants from India, and they have come to our country only a few days ago. They have been sent as a gift to Soviet children by India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

"While I was in the Soviet Union," Nehru wrote, "I had the pleasure of meeting a very large number of children, and everywhere they gave me messages and sent greetings for the children of India. Now, on behalf of the children of India, I am sending two rather large gifts to the children of the Soviet Union. These gifts are two baby elephants. Though they look large, they are really still babies, only a year old. They are going to the children of the Soviet Union as emissaries of the children of India, carrying with them friendly good wishes....

I hope that the children of the Soviet Union will befriend these little emissaries and remember the children of India, whose representatives they are."

To those little friends of ours,
Ravi and Shashi, this little book is dedicated.



Ravi's Birthplace

Far away from here, in the south of India, there is a beautiful, prosperous region called Mysore.

Ravi was born there.

Ravi's mother is a working elephant. Her name is Lalita.

It has been eight years since Lalita was caught in the jungle and tamed. Since then, this elephant has been helping men in their work.

Ravi used to go to work every day with his mother.

Of course, Ravi is still not capable of working himself. He used to just watch. With great ease and simplicity Lalita lifted heavy logs, bales of cotton, heavy stones and sacks of rice.

One morning, Lalita loaded sugarcane bundles on a lorry. Ravi was watching how his mother lifted the heavy bundles with her trunk, and then he wanted to try it himself. He takes a sugarcane stick from the bundle with his trunk and starts carrying it. The stick is long and it dragged on the ground at one end. But Ravi did not lose hope. He dragged the stick to the lorry, and gave it to his mother. Ravi did not have the strength to place the sugarcane stick on the lorry on his own.

When Ravi returned, he felt encouraged. This time he wrapped the entire bundle of sugarcane in his trunk. He pulled once, pulled twice -- but the bundle did not budge an inch from its place. Ravi tried hard once again, but suddenly his legs faltered and he narrowly escaped falling.

Lalita was watching this. She came to Ravi and lovingly gathered him in her trunk and took him to the other side.

Son! It is not yet time for you to work!

Acquaintance with Shashi

Ravi is very calm and has a serious nature. When a rope was tied around his neck and he was taken to one side, he neither resisted nor yelped. He lived among men and was not afraid of them.

Ravi was brought to a city called Bangalore. Here a goods train was waiting for him at the railway station.

Grass was spread on the floor of the compartment and there was a grill in the middle.

Ravi climbed into the compartment with the help of a wooden bridge and stood on the left side of the grill. As soon as he climbed, he started working. He picked up some grass with his trunk and put it in his mouth. Then he pick more grass and put it on his back. He kept repeating it.

When Ravi, was engaged in this work, he heard someone yelping. He peeped out of the compartment door and saw Shashi standing there. Shashi was adamant and did not want to get into the compartment.

Ravi kept looking at Shashi in surprise. He wanted to know why she was so insistent and screaming. In fact, Ravi did not know that Shashi had been caught in the remote jungles of Coorg only a few days back, and was not yet accustomed to the company of human beings.

Finally, two men pulled Shashi into the compartment, and made her stand on the right side of the railing.

It was somewhat dark inside the compartment, but that did not prevent Ravi from extending his trunk towards his neighbour. He hissed and neighed, but Shashi did not pay any attention to him. She hid in a corner and bowed her head.

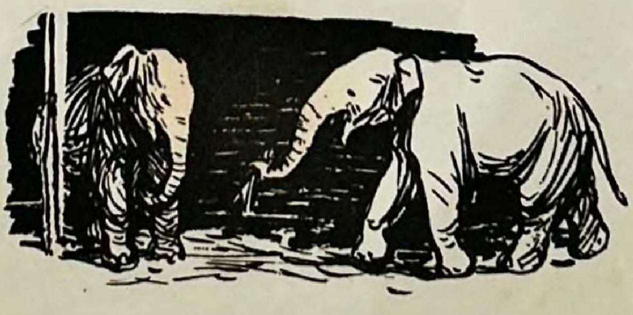
Finally the compartment was attached to the train.

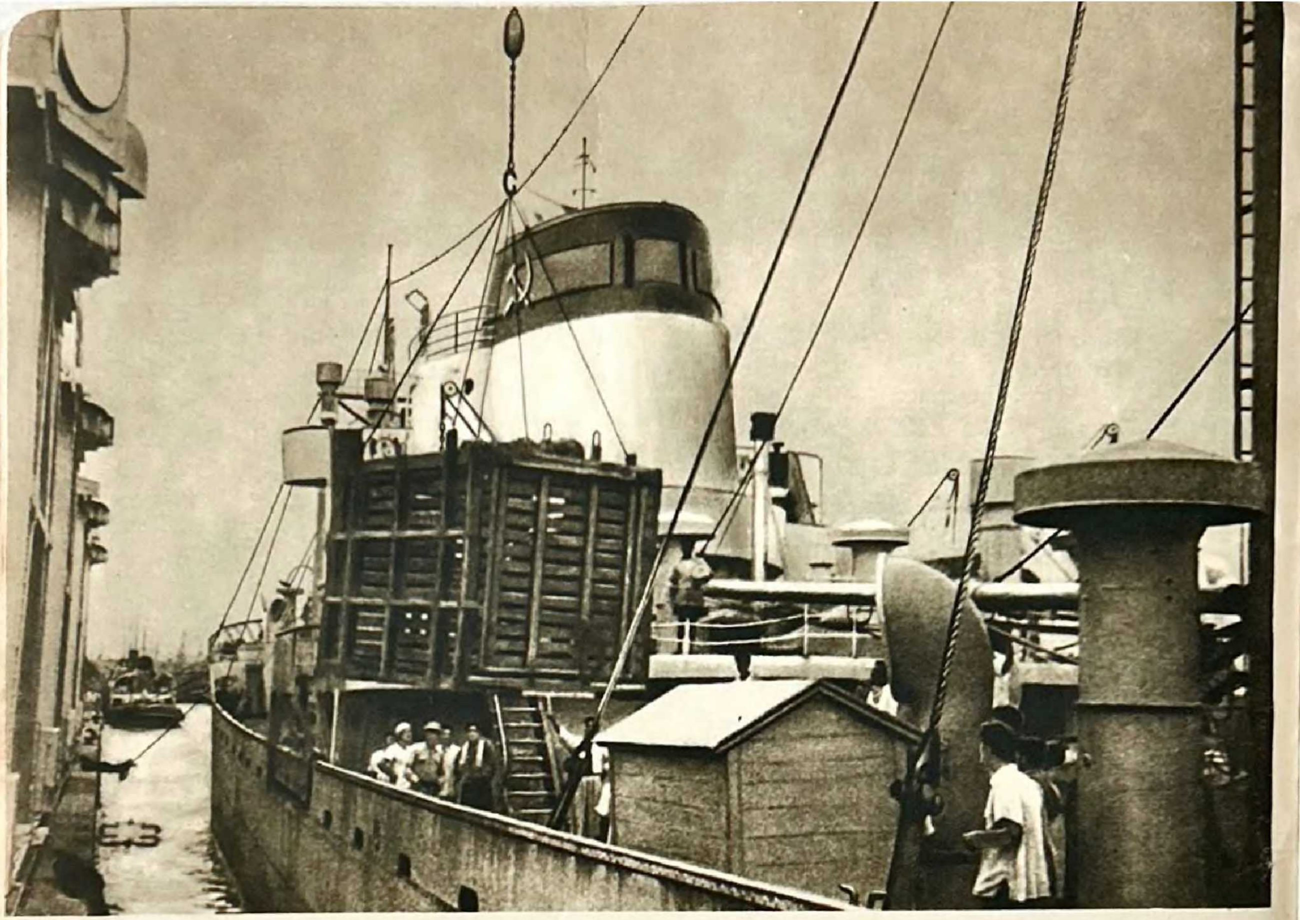
The engine driver whistled and the train started to move.

Shashi began standing first on one foot than on the other. She turned her head towards the railing. It was better to stand like that once the train picked up speed.

Ravi stood in his place for a while, squirming, then he too came and stood near the railing.

Their acquaintance began.

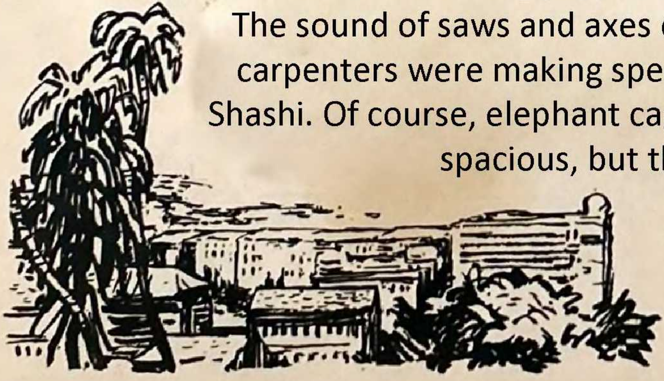




Before the long journey

The next day Ravi and Shashi reached the big city of Bombay. Their coach was taken to the sea port, and there safely put on rails. But it turned out that the journey was still not over. The elephants were now being prepared for a much long journey.

The sound of saws and axes could be heard in the port. The carpenters were making special wooden cages for Ravi and Shashi. Of course, elephant cages should be comfortable and spacious, but they should also be very strong.



Therefore the cages were not made of ordinary wood, but of the strongest Indian rosewood or "shisham".

The sewing shops machines were humming too. Here the tailors were making special covers to drape Ravi and Shashi. The covers for the elephants had to be comfortable and beautiful, and even more so, warm. So the drapes were made of the warmest woollen cloth. The horns and honking of lorries could be heard in the harbour. The lorry-drivers were bringing rice and sugar, sugarcane and milk, pineapples and dry fruits, banana tree stumps, green grass and dried fodder to the harbour. All right! May Ravi and Shashi be well fed during the journey, may they eat the most delicious and tasty food for their good health!

Loading the ship

When all preparations were complete, a Soviet ship called the "Stavropol" arrived at the dock of the Bombay port.

"Now we can start loading," said Captain Chernobrovkin.

Two trucks carrying cages came up near the ship. Ravi's cage stood on the first truck, and Shashi's on the second.

The arm of a heavy hoisting crane first turned towards Ravi's cage. To prevent Ravi from getting frightened, his cage was covered with tarpaulin, and it was tied tightly with steel ropes.

But Ravi was not afraid. As soon as the hoisting crane pulled the ropes, Ravi first curled up his front legs and then his hind legs, and lay down on the dry and soft grass spread on the floor of his cage.

The cage shook a little, and got lifted from the truck, and Ravi, rising slowly, reached the ship over the harbour. He did not get enough time to think or react as he had already reached the edge of the ship's deck.

Now it was Shashi's turn.

The lifting crane stuck its hook into her cage. Instead of lying down quietly, Shashi ran from one corner to the other and started shrieking loudly and crying.

Suddenly Shashi heard what sounded like a trumpet -- it was coming somewhere from the deck. It was not the ship's whistle, nor the smokestack, but someone's voice, very familiar and oft-heard. This unexpected event made Shashi fall silent, and then within a few minutes she was also on the ship.

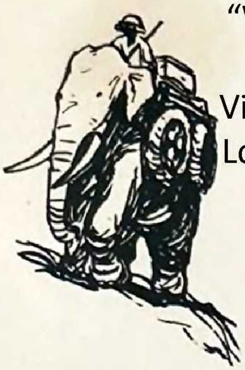
But who blew the trumpet on the ship?

The elephant cages were placed on the left side of the deck.

When the sailors removed the tarpaulins from their cages, Ravi and Shashi looked left and right and saw their other shipmates. They were Bac Jap and Voi Kai Lon. They were standing in large iron cages on the deck on the other side of the ship, and were stretching out their trunks towards the elephants.

“You see, you two are not alone here,”

Captain Chernobrovkin said to the little elephants.



Bac Jap and Voi Cai Lon are Vietnamese elephants, and if we translate their names, you will find that Bac Jap means "White Claws" and Voi Cai Lon means "Big Mother Elephant". Not long ago there was a war going on in their homeland Vietnam. People were fighting the enemy. Bak Jap and Voi Cai Lon also took part in this war. Day and night, through swamps and impenetrable jungles, they brought ammunition, weapons and food for the fighting people's army. Vietnamese soldiers and officers fondly and affectionately called them "our war comrades".

"Our comrades in arms," that is what the men who come with them from Vietnam called the elephants. These men had themselves recently joined the People's Army and were fighting alongside the elephants.

There is no doubt that Ravi and Shashi did not understand all this. And they did not even know that the ship "Stavropol" was carrying Bac Jap and Voi Cai Lon as gifts from Vietnam to the Soviet people. But Ravi and Shashi were certainly satisfied and delighted to see these big elephants in their vicinity. As it turned out later, these were the voices they had heard during the loading! The big elephants were worried about the little ones and so they trumpeted.

Happy Sea Voyage!

By evening all preparations were complete; Ravi and Shashi's cages were firmly fastened above the deck, and their provisions were stored in the ship's cellars. "Don't be surprised – many men are needed to take care of two small elephants," said Doctor Sardar Khan to the captain. He was the chief inspector of a zoo in India.

Along with them, veterinarian Dr. Rao, and employees of the Mysore Zoo, Muhammad Hashim and Peer Pasha, also boarded the ship "Stavropol".

Dr. Rao said:

"Ravi and Shashi have given you enough trouble. From now on during the journey, we will take care of the elephants ourselves. We will feed them and look after their health. It is very important that the Soviet children receive Mr. Nehru's gift in a safe condition."

The ship "Stavropol" was about to leave the Bombay port. Many people had gathered at the harbour.

"May the voyage be successful!“ the spectators shouted.

"Thank you!“ the Soviet sailors answered their Indian friends.

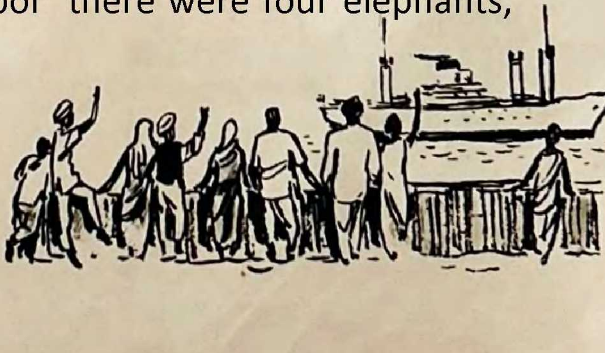
"Spasibo! Spasibo! -- Thank you! Thank you!" repeated Dr. Khan, Dr. Rao, Hashim and Pasha.

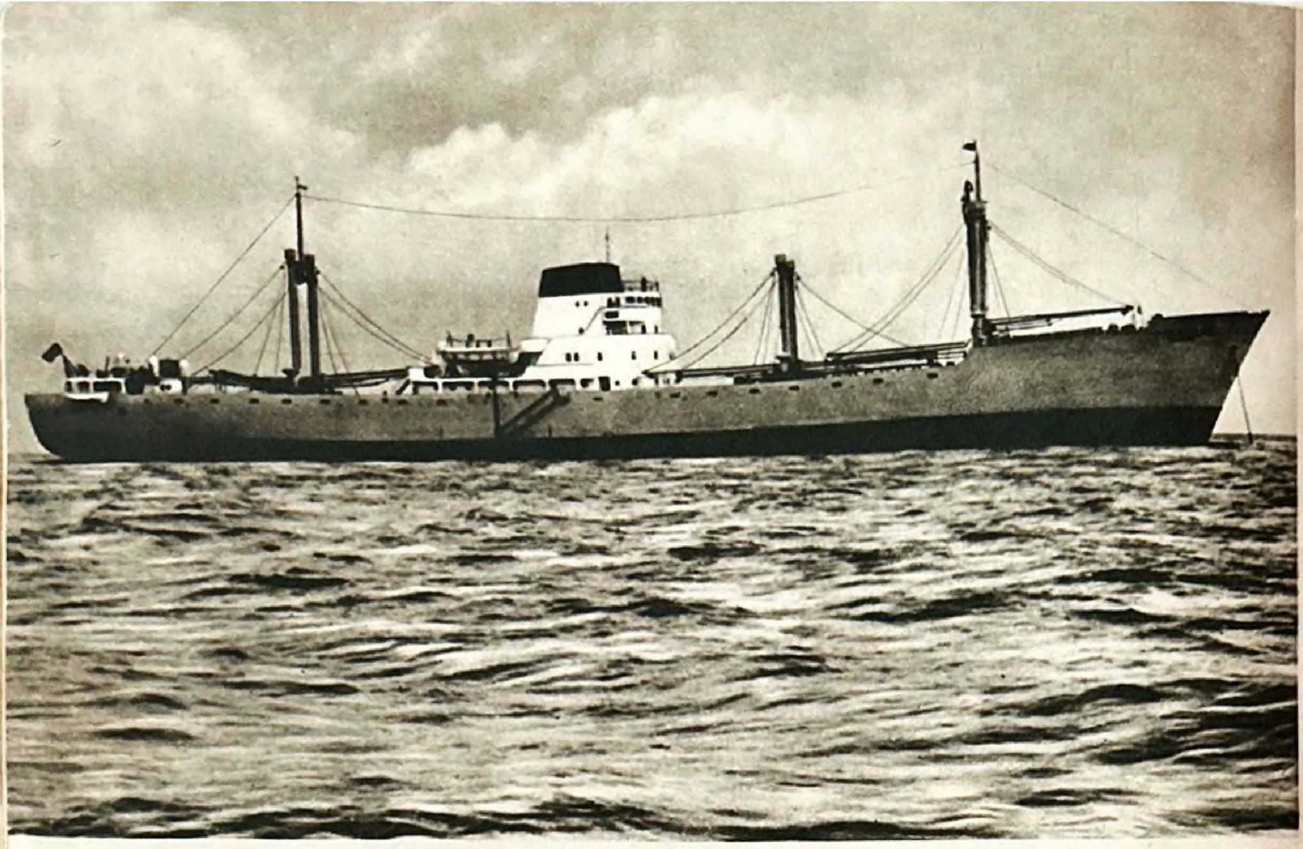
“Spasibo!” was the first Russian word that the Indians learned on the Soviet ship.

That evening the following entry was penned in the diary of the “Stavropol”: “Bombay. Friday. 5th August 1955. Two elephants loaded and four caretakers embarked, arrival point Odessa port.”

A Floating Zoo

Earlier the “Stavropol” was an ordinary ship, but now it had become a full-fledged zoo. In most zoos, it is difficult to even find one elephant, but on the “Stavropol” there were four elephants, two big and two small!





But Bak Jap and Voi Kai Lon and Ravi, Shashi were not the only animals traveling on the ship.

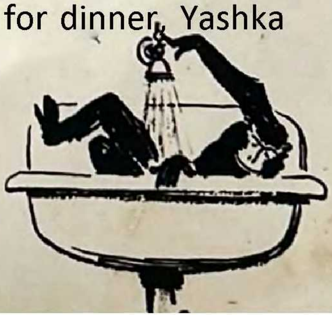
There were several smaller passengers: Yashka, Borka, Zorka and Mahka. The sailors had given these names to the four small monkeys. These monkeys were also gifted to the ship's crew by the Vietnamese. These monkeys were very mischievous and caused endless trouble.

Among them, Yashka was the most troublesome. He would run on the deck endlessly and then suddenly barge into someone's cabin. He would pick up a book to read - and then tear it up; if he found a pencil - he would break it; he would snatch glasses from the person's nose - and he would not rest until he had broken them.

In every cabin Yashka would definitely climb into the wash basin. The sailors had come to know his habits. So, they would fill the wash basin with water to let Yashka splash and bathe and be happy.

But one day Yashka got into trouble. He created so much trouble on the deck that his foot slipped and he fell over the side of the ship into the sea. This unexpected plunge into the open sea would have been the very tragic end of Yashka, if he had not been able to catch hold of the thick rope that the sailors had thrown towards him from the side of the ship.

Yashka's antics were most annoying to Galina Vladimirovna, the restaurant manager. As soon as she laid the table for dinner, Yashka would be there: either stealing eggs from a plate, or stealing sweets, or fleeing away with the buttered bread.



But one day Yashka became very naughty: he sprinkled talcum powder all over himself, then stole Galina Vladimirovna's lipstick and painted all the walls of the cabin.

Yes, Ravi and Shashi could not see all this monkey mischief. Yashka, Borka, Zorka and Myka were as afraid of the small elephants as they were of the big ones. So during the entire voyage they would run away from the elephant pens which were placed on the front part of the deck. Yashka, Borka, Zorka and Myka were not only afraid of elephants, but as soon as they saw Shipoon or Svist, they would leap like lightning to the top of the mast and would not come down until the cause of their fear was removed.

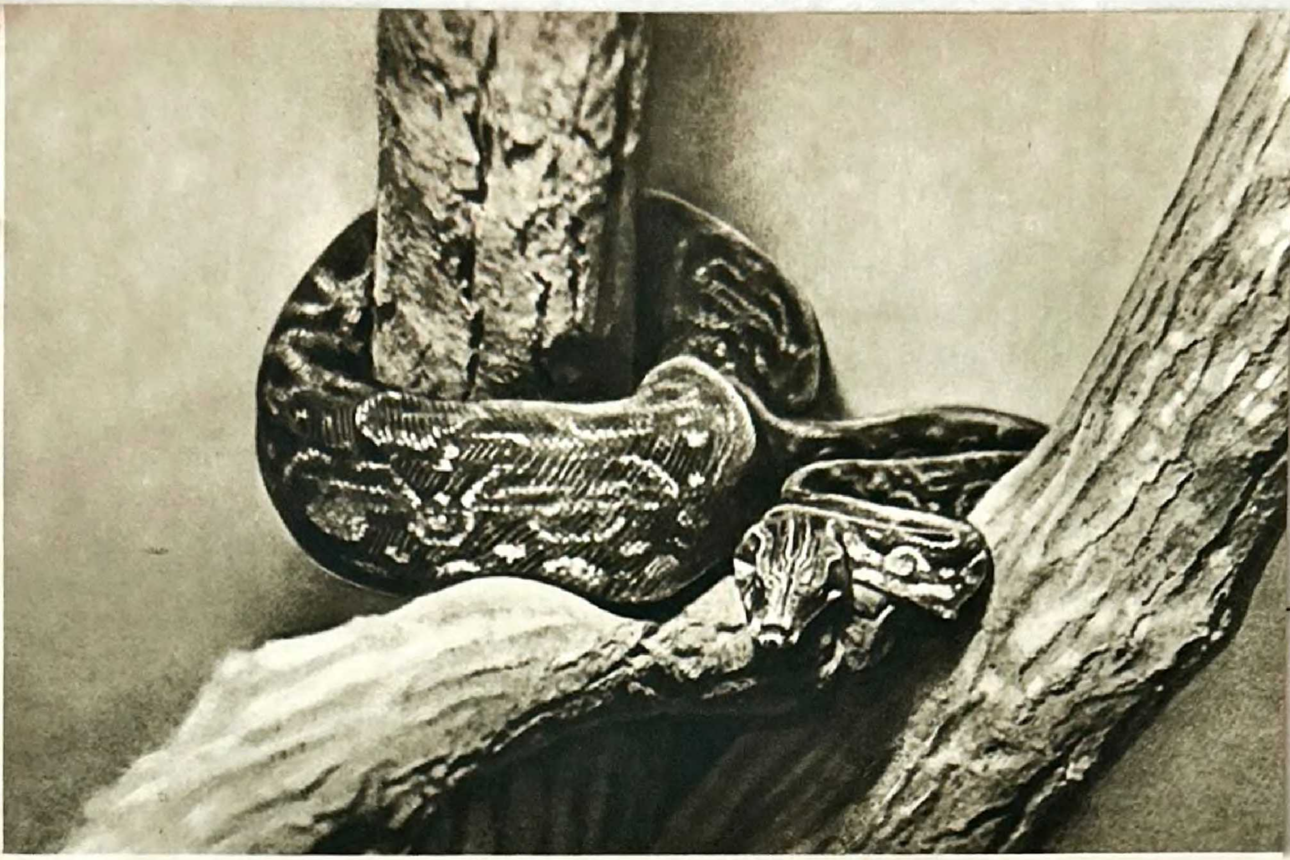
Shipoon and Svist were two python cubs, who had also boarded from Vietnam. Pythons are terrible snakes -- but none of the sailors were afraid of them. Shipoon and Svist are still babies and small -- they were just two meters long -- and they posed no threat to humans.

It will be a different matter when they grow up to eight or ten meters long.

But since Ravi and Shashi boarded the ship, the pythons' lives had changed. Captain Chernobrovkin had given strict, very strict orders that Shipoon and Svist should never be brought out on deck.

"Munna and Munni should not be frightened!" he said.

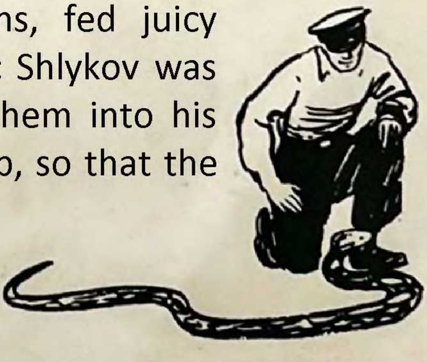
The captain lovingly called Ravi and Shashi - Munna and Munni.

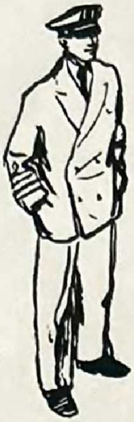


Each one to his own liking

The floating zoo had many visitors. All the sailors used to spend time with the animals after their duty was over.

And each one had his own preferences. Petty officer Savoskin looked after the monkeys, sailor Kolomitz, together with his Vietnamese companions, fed juicy sweets to the big elephants, and mechanic Shlykov was fond of pythons—he fed them and took them into his cabin, warming them under an electric lamp, so that the Shipoon and Svist did not feel cold.





Only Captain Chernobrovkin -- either because it was his duty or because he could not decide whom he liked more-- was attracted to all these extraordinary passengers on his ship.

But many spectators especially flocked to the cages of Ravi and Shashi.

“Brothers! Don't all gather together on the left deck!” said the young electrician Sokolov, “otherwise, the ship will capsize!”

Sokolov was cracking a joke! It was quite possible that he himself, more than anyone else, was enthusiastic about Ravi and Shashi.

Early in the morning, before daylight, Sokolov would go up to the elephants.

“Good morning! Good morning!” he would say to Ravi and Shashi, and it seemed to him that the little elephants understood what he was saying.

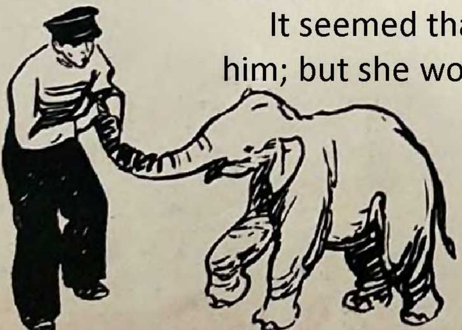
Ravi stretched out his still very short and thin trunk from his cage, and licked Sokolov right on the face as he sat kneeling in front.

Sokolov blew into his trunk, and Ravi liked it. He hissed and bent his front legs -- and sat down on his knees.

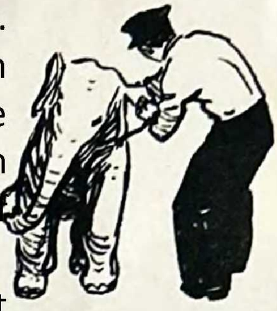
“Well done my little elephant!” Sokolov said lovingly right into the little elephant's trunk, and Ravi sat quietly, as he listened to new and incomprehensible words.

And then the other sailors came to his cage, and one after another blew on Ravi's trunk and talked to him.

It seemed that Shashi also felt pleased when they talked to him; but she would not let anyone blow on her trunk: as if she were saying -- "Blow, blow on Ravi, if he likes it, but I don't like this joke."



And Shashi hid her trunk, and turned her head away displeased -- she was upset.



Shashi did not often stick her trunk out of the cage. Though she was small, once her trunk got stuck between the boards. And that made Shashi really afraid as she thought she might lose her trunk forever. What is an elephant without a trunk? Certainly not an animal of much use!

But when Sokolov stroked Shashi's ears, she did not protest: her round little eyes sparkled with joy.

But Ravi allowed everyone to play whatever they liked with him. He would run around in his cage for hours, and when he had had enough of running, he would fall on one side, and then go off to sleep in jiffy.

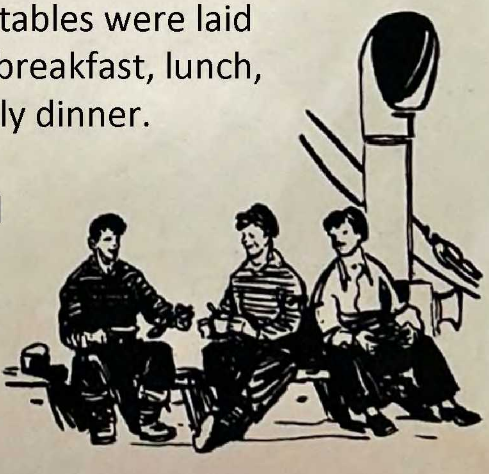
He slept not only at night, but also during the day, and on waking, he would raise his trunk, yawn wide, and look with interest towards the right deck where the cages of Bak Jap and Voi Kai Lon stood. Perhaps being half asleep, Ravi thought of them as his parents, or perhaps in his dream he saw himself growing quickly and becoming as big as them.

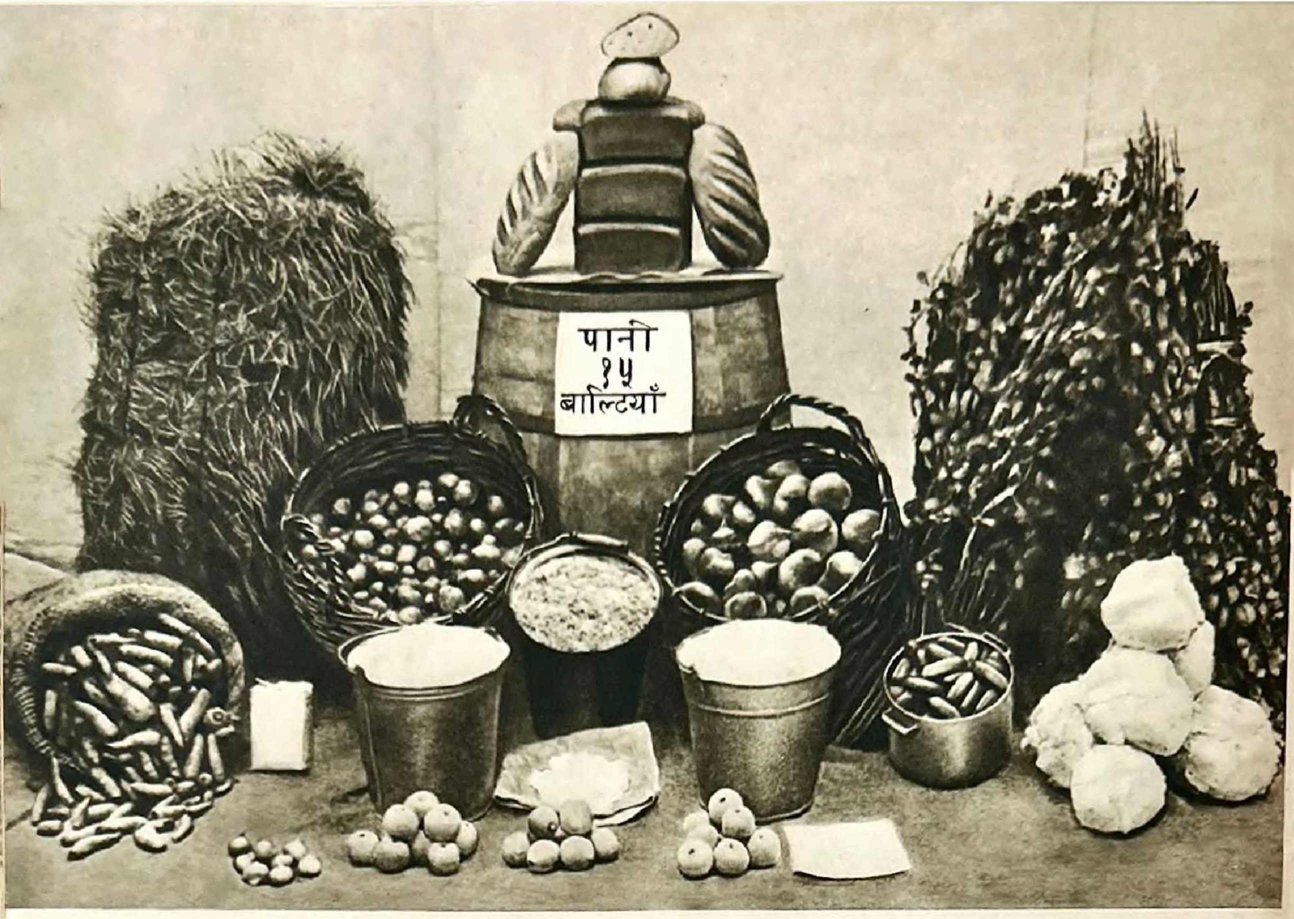
Breakfast and Lunch

Four times in twenty-four hours food tables were laid in the sailors' rest room. The sailors had breakfast, lunch, then a little refreshment and finally dinner.

Elephants do not need to eat so often.

They have a special kind of routine and special kinds of food.





At 9 a.m. Ravi and Shashi had breakfast. At 5 p.m. they had lunch again. And although Ravi and Shashi were still very young, each of them ate more food in a day than any grown man could eat.

Early in the morning, Dr. Rao opened his notebook. He read: “Dry rice – one kilogram, sugar – two hundred and fifty grams, fresh milk – five hundred grams, salt – fifteen grams, dry grass – twenty kilograms, four sugarcane sticks, green grass and twigs – as much as you want.” Look, this is all what should be given to each elephant every day. And to the big elephants – even more. Did you see how much!

Ravi and Shashi could easily manage with grass and dry fodder; they would pick up small bundles with their trunk and put them in their mouth. They would even eat sugarcane sticks on their own. Ravi and Shashi would take the cleaned and cut sugarcane pieces in their trunks straight from the hands of their caretaker, and put them in their mouths with great skill, sucking the sweetness and relishing its taste.

But with the rest of the food--there was difficulty.

Once, before boarding the ship, a bowl of cooked rice was placed in front of Ravi. Ravi hung his trunk over the bowl, and moved it around, but he was not able to pick up the rice. At last, it seemed that he picked up a handful of rice in his trunk, but just as he tried to put it in his mouth--the rice scattered. Ravi kept licking the empty trunk, screaming in displeasure.

Now the bowl was placed in front of Shashi. She also hung her trunk and tried scraping the rice, but could not eat it.

Bowls full of milk were brought for Ravi and Shashi. Everyone thought they will not refuse milk: as all children love milk!

Ravi and Shashi looked at the milk, but perhaps they did not understand what kind of liquid it was and turned their trunks away.

It was a big surprise. It turned out that Ravi and Shashi were so small that they were not able to eat on their own.

And they needed help. Fresh milk was added to the cooked rice, and then granulated sugar was added, everything was mixed -- and now a nice *halwa* was ready.

Mohammad Hashim took a handful of *halwa* in his hand, pressed it into a ball so that it would not spill, and put it in Ravi's mouth.

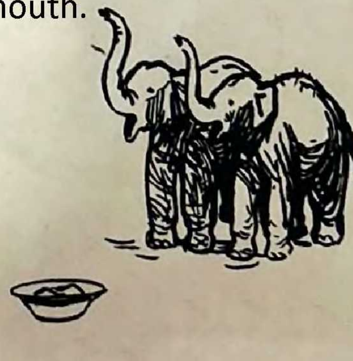
Ravi tasted it. The *halwa* was sweet and delicious.

He chewed it and swallowed it.

Then he raised his trunk and opened his mouth:

“Give me more!"

Peer Pasha took a handful of *halwa* in his hand,
pressed it into a ball so that it would not spill,
and put it in Shashi's mouth.



Shashi chewed and swallowed the *halwa*. She also raised her trunk and opened her mouth: “Give me some more!” This is how Ravi and Shashi were fed on the ship.

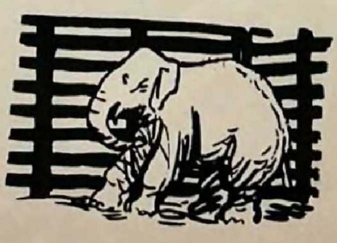
All the sailors on deck!

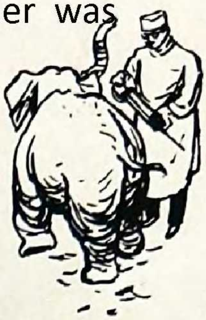
The weather was not pleasant at all. The month of August in the southern seas was full of storms, hurricanes and strong winds. The ship swayed a lot on its way to Bombay, and it swayed a lot on its return too.

The big elephants were in a bad condition due to the swaying of the ship, and Ravi and Shashi were even worse. Their cages were covered with tarpaulin, but the showers fell on the small elephants from all sides. The sea water was salty, and no matter how thick their skin was, it itched and hurt due to the salt.

Captain Chernobrovkin noticed this, and therefore tried to steer the ship in the opposite direction to the wind, so that the waves would fall on the bow of the ship, rather than on the deck. The ship cut through the waves with its sharp bottom -- and the splashes flew in the other direction, rather than falling on the deck.

But as the ship entered the Gulf of Aden, on the border of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, heavy rain began to fall on the decks. The sea was surging and the storm was more intense than before. Suddenly a great wave struck the ship and rolled over the floor of the deck, engulfing the left deck. At the same time, the sound of wood cracking was heard along with Shashi's scream. Shashi, drenched from head to toe, stood hiding in a corner, and from there, looking with frightened eyes at the door of her cage which had been broken by the force of the waves.





"All sailors on deck!" Captain Chernobrovkin's order was heard on the ship.

All the sailors ran on deck.

"Immediately repair the broken door, and make the cages even stronger!" the captain ordered.

And the sailors started to work.

For a few hour saws and axes kept on working, and chains kept rattling on the deck. The sailors did a great job: they straightened the boards of Shashi's cage which had bent, and repaired the broken door. And to avoid any kind of unpleasant incident in the future, they secured the doors of the cage with iron chains instead of ordinary locks.

How Shashi got better

Every doctor needs medical instruments for examining his patients. Doctor Rao also had similar medical instruments. But Dr. Rao was no ordinary doctor and his instruments were also not of the ordinary type, they are very big in size. Dr. Rao treated animals. Ravi and Shashi were his patients.

Dr. Rao would listen to the sound of the trunk of the baby elephants with a stethoscope, measure their body temperature with a thermometer, examine them to see if they had a cough or a cold. Dr. Rao remained very worried throughout the journey. Now suddenly a new worry arose: Shashi fell ill due to the excessive swaying of the ship.

Shashi stopped eating and drinking. For four days and four nights she lay in her cage, and did not get up at all: either she kept dozing or kept sucking her trunk.

Doctor Rao took out a large squirt gun from the medical instruments kept in his medicine box, filled it with glucose and brought it to Shashi.

It was the first time Shashi had seen a squirt gun in her life, and like all children she was frightened. But actually, injecting the gun did not turn out to be so frightening. Shashi screamed, but Dr. Rao quickly hid the empty squirt gun and came out of the cage.

At the time of the second injection in the evening, Shashi screamed again. But the next morning when the doctor came she was very quiet and calm.

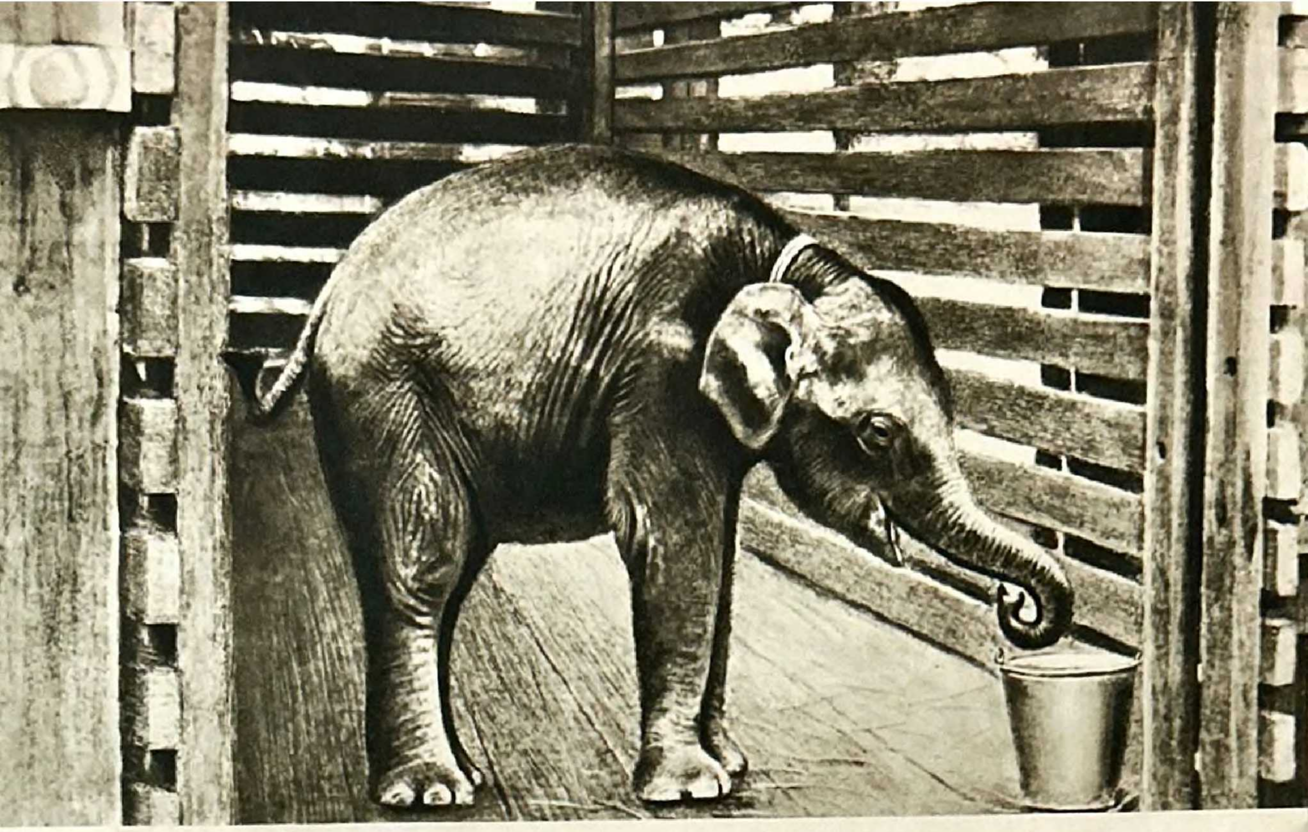
Her eyes lit up. Shashi rose to her feet, and suddenly she saw that the cage floor was not shaking as before. She looked at the sea, which had become calm and was not spraying water over the deck of the ship. For the first time during the long journey, the blue sky above Shashi's head, lit up with the rays of the sun.

Now the ship "Stavropol" was sailing in the calm waters of the Red Sea.

Ravi and Shashi's cleverness

There were neither strong winds nor storms in the Red Sea. But it became terribly hot - forty degrees Celsius! The southerly sun was scorching from morning to evening. The iron deck of the ship began to burn under the feet like a hot pan.

Ravi and Shashi's cages were again covered with tarpaulin, but despite everything, the baby elephants felt hot. They repeatedly stretched out their trunks and asked for water. After drinking to their heart's content, Ravi and Shashi would pour the water on their backs – to cool themselves.

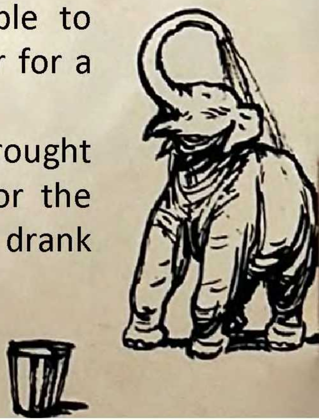


The heat wave continued for three days. Although there was a lot of water in the Red Sea, the salty water of the sea was not suitable for drinking. The freshwater in the tanks was slowly dwindling, and Port Said was still far away. It was the first stop after leaving Bombay. It was possible to refill the freshwater tanks once they reached there.

The captain ordered, “Save freshwater, keep it only for preparing food and drinking!”

This meant that Ravi and Shashi would not be able to sprinkle water on their backs. They would have to suffer for a few days.

After breakfast, Mohammed Hashim and Peer Pasha brought only half the amount of water they usually brought for the baby elephants. Ravi and Shashi drank all the water, and nothing was left for bathing.



Lunch time came, and the Indian servants again brought drinking water for the elephants. But for some reason Ravi did not drink the water as usual, instead he poured it all on his back. Shashi did exactly the same. After emptying the bucket, the elephants stretched out their trunks and looked slyly at Mohammed Hashim and Peer Pasha:

“Give us more water! This time we will drink it!”

What could Mohammed Hashim and Peer Pasha do? They picked up the empty buckets and went to fetch water again. Elephants cannot be deprived of water!

“How clever!” Captain Chernobrovkin thought in surprise. The elephants trick was even better than the captain’s!

In the meantime, Ravi and Shashi had placed their trunks in the newly filled buckets. After sprinkling water on themselves to their heart's content, they were now enthusiastically putting water in their mouths!

What happened to Ravi?

The ship had reached near the Suez Canal, and there they encountered an obstacle. Two foreign ships suddenly came and stopped in front. So “Stavropol” had to stop.

The Suez Canal is not wide, and there is no way that two or three big ships can pass side-by-side.

The ship had just stopped, when a loud deafening scream was heard from the deck. It was Ravi's scream. He was running fast here and there in his cage, and was stretching his trunk sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right.

The Indian caretakers ran towards his cage. Doctor Rao entered the cage and patting the elephant, tried to calm him down, but Ravi kept screaming as if someone was stabbing him with a knife.

After a while, the ships which had stopped in front started to move. "Stavropol" also started moving. At that very moment Ravi stopped screaming, as if nothing had happened, and started eating grass. After a few hours, the ship had to stop again, and again at that very moment Ravi started screaming.

"What happened to Ravi? Maybe he has fallen ill?" Dr. Rao worried.

When the "Stavropol" came out of the Suez Canal and anchored at a pier in Port Said, Ravi's screams were heard again. He kept screaming continuously for several hours, kept screaming in a very sad voice as if calling for help, and at the same time kept stretching his trunk towards the land.

Now everyone understood the reason for Ravi's plight. Every time the ship stopped, he thought that the journey was over and he wanted permission to go on land. In fact, Ravi was tired of the long sea journey.

All the sailors on deck again!

One morning the command was heard again:

"All sailors on deck!"

All the sailors who were not on watch also rushed on deck: Did something untoward happened again?

The Mediterranean was calm. There was peace above deck. The cages were in place, the elephants were alive and healthy. So, what was the matter?

"Today is bathing day," Captain Chernobrovkin explained, "today the animals have to be scrubbed and bathed."

A deep vessel was brought up on deck, and filled to the brim with hot water:

"Come on, monkeys! Jump into the water!"

Yashka was the first to jump into the water. While he kept splashing and diving, the other monkeys sat at a distance, and did not even try to come near the water. Lo and behold, the junior officer Savoskin arrived. He grabbed Yashka by his front paws and pulled him up on deck: "You've had your bath--enough!"

Borka, Zorka and Mahka were waiting for this. They rushed to the vessel and jumped into the water with a thud.

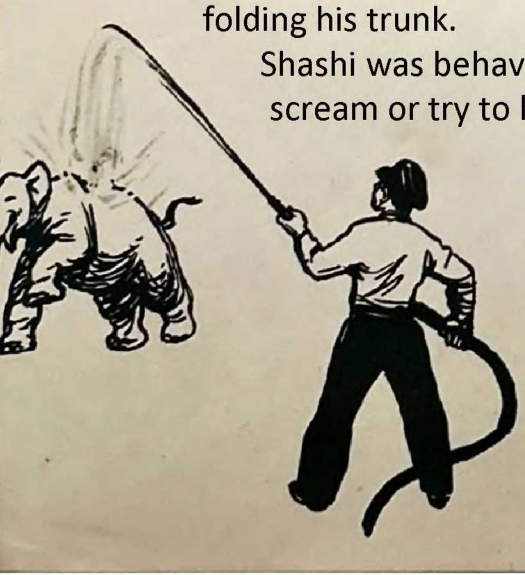
Yashka screamed in anger. Somehow freeing himself from Savoskin's hands, he ran to the vessel, and immediately, without thinking, began to dive in while trying to drown the other monkeys.

Junior officer Savoskin had to again lift Yashka by his paws and drag him away from the vessel.

Just when the most amusing events were taking place on the left side of the ship, Ravi and Shashi were bathing in their own way: the electrician Sokolov was pouring water over them with a fire hose.

Ravi was afraid of water for some unknown reason. He was jumping in his cage, screaming, standing with his front legs against the walls, trying to hide himself from the stream of water by folding his trunk.

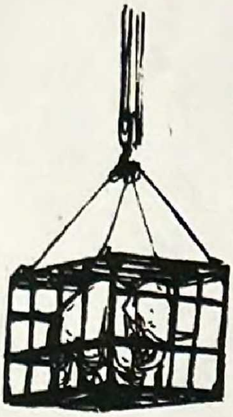
Shashi was behaving in a completely different way: she did not scream or try to hide in a corner or stand on her hind legs, but very calmly, turning from right to left, she was enjoying the water stream. It seemed that Shashi loved bathing.



The ship docked

Sixteen days and nights passed after Ravi and Shashi boarded the ship. Finally, the “Stavropol” reached Odessa. It was time for the passengers to disembark. As in Bombay, a huge lifting crane was placed by the side of the ship.

On the deck everything was ready: the sailors had opened the cages of the Bac Jap and Voi Cai Lon: the Vietnamese mahouts had taken their places on the backs of their elephants.



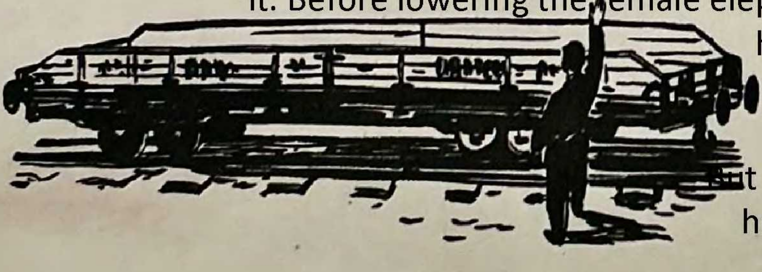
It was impossible to leave the elephants alone at such a time--they might get frightened during unloading, break the cages and then everything would be lost ! Bak Jap was the first to be unloaded from the ship. The lifting crane lifted his cage and began to carry it towards the harbour. It seemed that everything was going well. Bak Jap stood calmly in his cage, and only moved his trunk slowly from side to side.

Slowly the crane turned towards the train standing at the harbour, the crane operator was ready to lower the cage on the platform, when suddenly the bottom of the cage broke from below, and the elephant's right front leg began to hang in the air. The crane operator immediately switched off the motor, and Bak Jap's cage remained hanging in the air above the platform.

What should be done now? If the cage was lowered to the platform, the elephant's leg could get crushed. And keeping Bak Jap suspended in the air was also dangerous. A frightened elephant could eventually break through the cage floor and thus get fatally hurt.

Now it turned out that the Vietnamese mahouts were not sitting on the elephants' backs in vain. The mahout took Bak Jap's neck in his arms and, looking at him with great affection, urged him to raise his feet. Bak Jap, as if he understood what was the matter, slowly lifted his front legs, and at the same moment found himself, along with the cage, on the railway platform.

Now it was Voi Kai Lon's turn. Having seen what had happened to Bak Jap, this female elephant had decided to defend herself. When the lifting crane lifted Voi Kai Lon from the deck, she stretched out her trunk and began to support the cage floor with it. Before lowering the female elephant onto the platform, they had to hold the cage in the air for a few minutes so that her trunk would not get hurt. But Kai Lon did not easily remove her trunk from under the cage.



But Ravi and Shashi turned out to be brave elephants. It was no trouble getting them down. The lifting crane hauled the elephants' cages off the ship's deck easily as if they were empty wooden crates.

Now only the monkeys and the snakes remained on the ship. They had to travel further by ship. From Odessa -- to Novorossiysk. Then from Novorossiysk they had to go even further -- to the pioneer children of the city of "Stavropol", with whom the sailors and officers of the ship had been friends for a long time.

New Neighbour

At the port of Odessa, the elephants were separated. The Vietnamese elephants Bac Jap and Voi Kai Lon were loaded onto a freight train and taken to far-off cities.

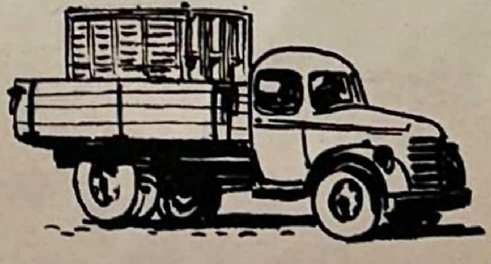
But the journey of the Indian elephants turned to be shorter.

Ravi and Shashi were loaded onto two lorries and taken through the city streets. After entering the zoo gate, they stopped in front of the elephant enclosure.

“What tiny babies!” the zoo's head Khariton Kharitonovich said surprisingly and... he hurried to call the lift crane. Although Ravi and Shashi were tiny, they were no ordinary babies, they were baby elephants. It was impossible to do without a lifting crane!

A special type of lorry was brought with the lifting crane, and the cages were taken down from the lorries.

For the first time, after that long journey, Ravi and Shashi set foot on the ground. Swaying unsteadily, they walked towards the elephant arena, which was surrounded by iron rods, and here, behind the fence, Ravi and Shashi saw a large female elephant.



“Get to know her, she is our "Dilli", Khariton Kharitonovich told the elephants. “She is also a child, only ten years old.”

The elephants looked at Dilli: “Well, what kind of a child is she! She is as tall as a big house and weighs probably three tons.”

Ravi and Shashi were tied to two nearby trees. The elephants extended their trunks towards Dilli, and Ravi even tried to get close to her.

But then it turned out that this new neighbour did not want to get acquainted with the visitors. She became agitated, and started trumpeting, and tried to break the chain, she even wanted to kill the new younger elephants.

The agitated Dilli had to be removed to the left corner of the arena, away from the younger elephants.

The younger elephants were upset by this disrespect, and did not even look at Dilli. Ravi put his trunk on Shashi's neck and began to caress her back covered with a little black hair very lovingly.

An hour of rest

At lunchtime, the elephants were brought their usual food: cooked rice with milk and sugar.

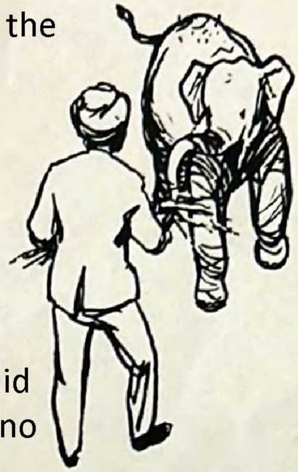
Shashi looked at the bowl of rice and turned her face away, "I don't want to eat --that's it! "

Shashi was just being coy.

On seeing the bowl of rice, Ravi raised his trunk and opened his mouth: “See I am not so foolish that I will not eat the food that is served to me!"

He ate a handful of rice, and then another, a third, a fourth, a fifth... and in no time emptied the bowl!

Shashi saw that Ravi had eaten not only his share of rice but also hers. When the sugarcane sticks were brought, he snatched the sweet juicy canes from the mahout's hand with his trunk.



After that Shashi did not even refuse to eat grass. Okay, she did not pick up the grass and put it on her back, as Ravi did. But Shashi was no less than Ravi in picking up the bundles of grass and putting them in her mouth.

After lunch--there was rest.

Shashi moved aside, chose a place where the sun did not shine, and then lay down on one side. There was no harm in dozing for an hour or two!

But it seemed that Ravi did not like this. He came towards Shashi, folded his feet and fell on her!

What could Shashi do, she got up with a jerk. She shook her head reluctantly, moved a little further and lay down again: “The rope is too short. You cannot get me here.”

And this is what happened: Ravi tried to come near her, but the short rope would not let him do that. Shashi sat quietly and closed her eyes.

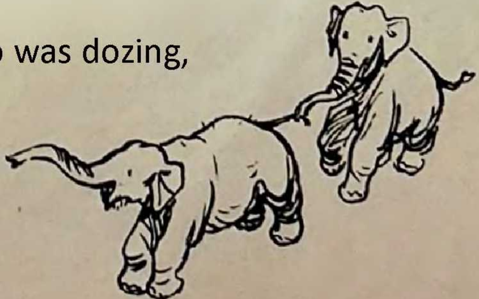
Suddenly, something happened? Someone was pulling her tail--once, twice and the third time!

Shashi screamed and stood up on her legs: “What’s the matter!”

It turned out that it was Ravi who was pulling her tail by stretching out his trunk.

In the other corner of the arena, Dilli, who was dozing, heard Shashi's voice and woke up.

It had been a long rest!



Bathing

Along with the elephants, their warm covers were also brought to the zoo --these drapes were made of warm cloth.

“If the air temperature falls below fifteen degrees,” Dr. Rao advised, “then cover them with the drapes. Otherwise, Ravi and Shashi are likely to catch a cold. Even baby elephants catch cold and flu.”

The drapes were not needed yet. The temperature in the shade was thirty degrees, and a bit higher in the sun.

There was no special pond in the zoo for the elephants to bathe.

So, a long rubber hose pipe used to wash roads was kept ready.

“Is there anyone who wants to take a bath?”

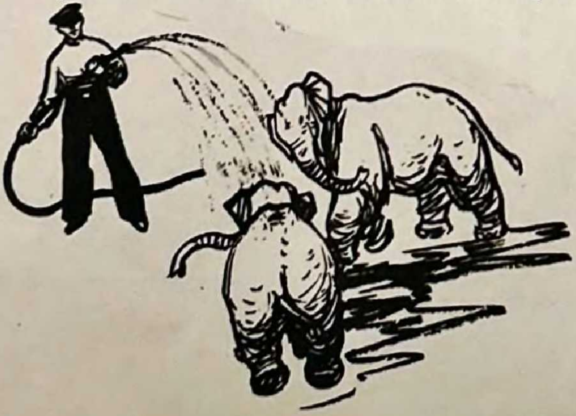
Someone wanted to take a bath.

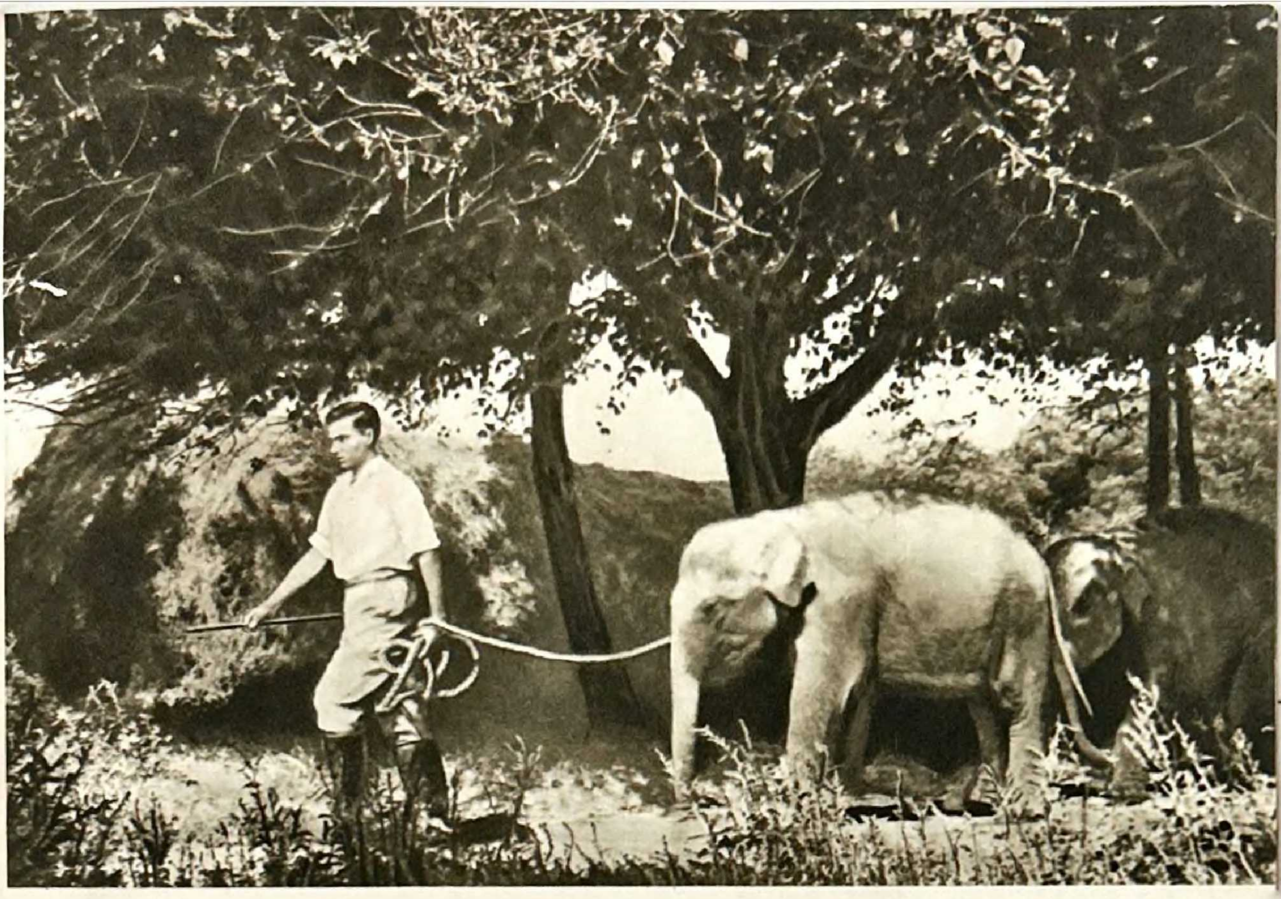
So that the elephants do not get scared, in the beginning, a stream of water was thrown towards the sky. This way a good was to create rainfall. Water fell on Ravi and Shashi. The baby elephants moved around the arena happily, trying to get under the biggest stream of water.

Then the water stream was directed straight on the elephants.

Screaming and pushing each other, Ravi and Shashi bent their front knees and raised their hind legs and waved their bodies and then lowered their backs under the stream of water.

“One should never overdo, not even a good thing,” said the head employee laughing. “Now we will bathe you every day.” Khariton Kharitonovich was no less pleased with the baths than with the elephants. He saw that little by little Ravi and Shashi were getting used to their new place. Now Shashi was behaving in a completely different way: she did not scream or try to hide in a corner or stand on her hind legs, but very calmly, turning from right to left, she loved the water which fell on her. It seemed that Shashi liked bathing very much.

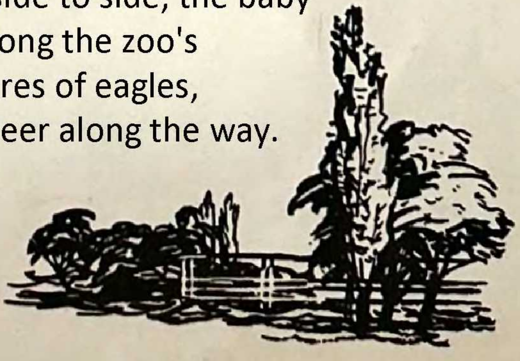




Ravi and Shashi go for a walk

Early in the morning, before a big crowd gathered at the zoo, Ravi and Shashi went for a walk.

When Ravi was led out of the elephant enclosure by rope, Shashi does not wait for any special invitation; she follows Ravi on her own. Swaying slightly from side to side, the baby elephants stroll one behind the other along the zoo's tree-lined main road, passing enclosures of eagles, foxes, lions, ostriches, leopards and deer along the way.



Ravi and Shashi's heads are slightly bowed, trunks almost touching the ground, but don't think that the baby elephants are unhappy. This time Ravi and Shashi were showing some signs of arrogance.

In the corner right in front of the zoo--there was a small open space. Small bushes and low, dense grass grew there. The elephants stopped there. Ravi was unleashed, and then the baby elephants started grazing on the grass.

Ravi was not able to pluck the grass yet, but he was trying to learn. He wanted to grab more grass--but his trunk was not yet able to do that, and the baby elephant did not have that much strength yet. Once in a while Ravi was able to pluck a handful of juicy green grass himself. He then happily shook the clump for a long time before putting it in his mouth.

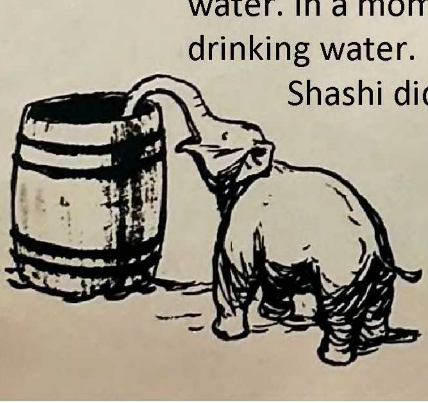
Shashi was lazy and did not pluck the grass herself. Bundles of grass had to be put in her trunk. To teach Shashi, Ravi took some grass from his trunk and threw it at her.

“You must learn. See how I do it!” Ravi seemed to be saying. Then he took a clump of grass in his trunk and tried to pull it out from the ground.

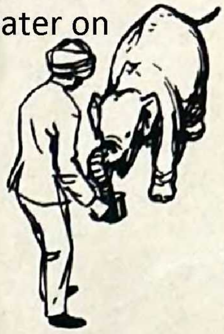
On their way back, the elephants did exactly what they did before: Ravi walked in a grand manner ahead tied to a rope, and Shashi followed.

Halfway through, they stopped again near a barrel of water. The barrel was high – the small elephants could not see what was inside. But Ravi immediately lifted his trunk up and put it in the water. In a moment, Ravi put his trunk into his mouth – he was drinking water.

Shashi did not understand what Ravi was doing. She watched very carefully, but did not even go near the barrel.



She would need help. Shashi was brought near the barrel and her trunk was put inside the water. But Shashi again threw a tantrum--and took her trunk out. Then the zoo staff sprinkled handfuls of water on Shashi.



"Look Shashi, this is water, water! You like to bathe in water and you drink it with great relish. Now drink it!"

But Shashi shook her head, shook the water off herself, but still refused to drink.

Then they took the help of a jug. They filled it with water and brought it to Shashi. Seeing the water, Shashi happily put her trunk inside the jug--and started drinking.

Ravi was standing near the barrel, but on seeing Shashi drinking water from the jug, he immediately turned and extended his trunk towards her. He also hissed angrily: Why was Shashi drinking from this beautiful, shining jug, while he had to drink from an ordinary barrel? What kind of justice was that!

But Shashi did not get angry with Ravi, and did not even object to his putting his trunk in the jug. Let the poor fellow drink. Friendship is all about forgiveness!

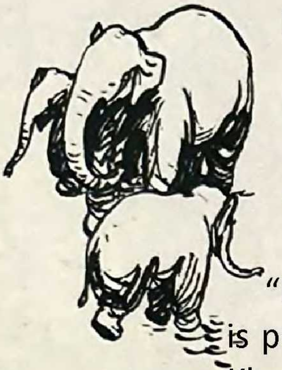
The neighbour's behaviour changes

Ravi and Shashi had finished their walk. It was time to return. They again returned to the main road and started walking towards the elephant house. But the little elephants had barely taken two steps when they heard someone scream.

Various animals and birds often scream in the zoo, and the elephants are quite used to hearing those sounds. When the lion roars in his cage, then the lioness in the adjacent cage starts roaring too, to protect her three little cubs. But Ravi and Shashi did not pay any attention to this.

But this time the scream was surprisingly familiar.

"Was it possible that this scream was from Dilli?"



Ravi and Shashi hurried towards the elephant stable. And Dilli, seeing that Ravi and Shashi had returned safely and well, stopped screaming and began to wave her trunk happily: "Come soon, I have been waiting for you for a long time!" Ravi and Shashi came inside the arena of their elephant stable and turned towards Dilli immediately.

"Perhaps it would be better not to let them come too close. It is possible that Dilli may try to harm them again!" said Khariton Kharitonovich worriedly. But it turned out that the head employee was worrying in vain. Dilli stroked the small elephants standing near her with her trunk, and her small kind eyes began to shine with affection and happiness. And Ravi and Shashi had long forgotten their first unpleasant meeting with their new neighbour and were rubbing themselves very peacefully against her huge powerful legs.

Visiting the Zoo

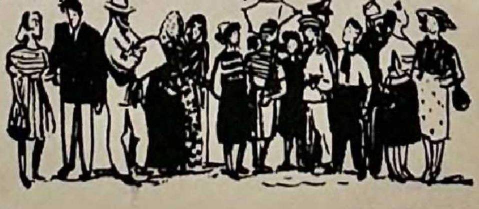
There had never been such a long line of visitors at the zoo gate before, but today there was one. Today was Sunday and so there were many more people.

"Looks like we'll have to stand in line. What do you think?" Captain Chernobrovkin asked his son.

"We will stand!"

Vova Chernobrovkin was only five years old, but he was ready to stand in line all day: he had to see Ravi and Shashi, no matter how much effort it took.

When people came to the port to welcome his father's ship, Vova had seen the big elephants well, but not so well the small ones - because they were not clearly visible from the docks.



But luckily, they did not have to stand in line all day. Soon Captain Chernobrovkin and his son were watching Ravi and Shashi play. They were pulling and snatching grass from each other.

A dense crowd of people surrounded the arena. And no one could tell if there were more children or adults in this crowd. But it was certain that Ravi and Shashi were playing with each other. And everyone, young and old, wanted to see Shashi.

“But who is who among them?” asked Vova Chernobrovkin, climbing onto his father’s shoulders.

"The one on the right is a boy named Ravi, and the one on the left is a girl named Shashi," his father explained.

Near the captain were his shipmates - electrician Sokolov, sailor Kolomitz, junior officer Savoskin and mechanic Ilykov. Who else would be happier to see Ravi and Shashi than the sailors of "Stavropol". They had all come to the zoo today without telling each other, to see if their former passengers were okay.

"And why don't they look at you?" Vova asked again with interest.

"Maybe they have forgotten us," his father answered.

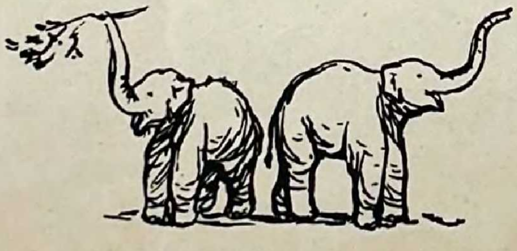
"Yes, they are still small. And with so many people, they probably can't see us!" Sokolov continued, as if he was speaking in favour of Ravi and Shashi.

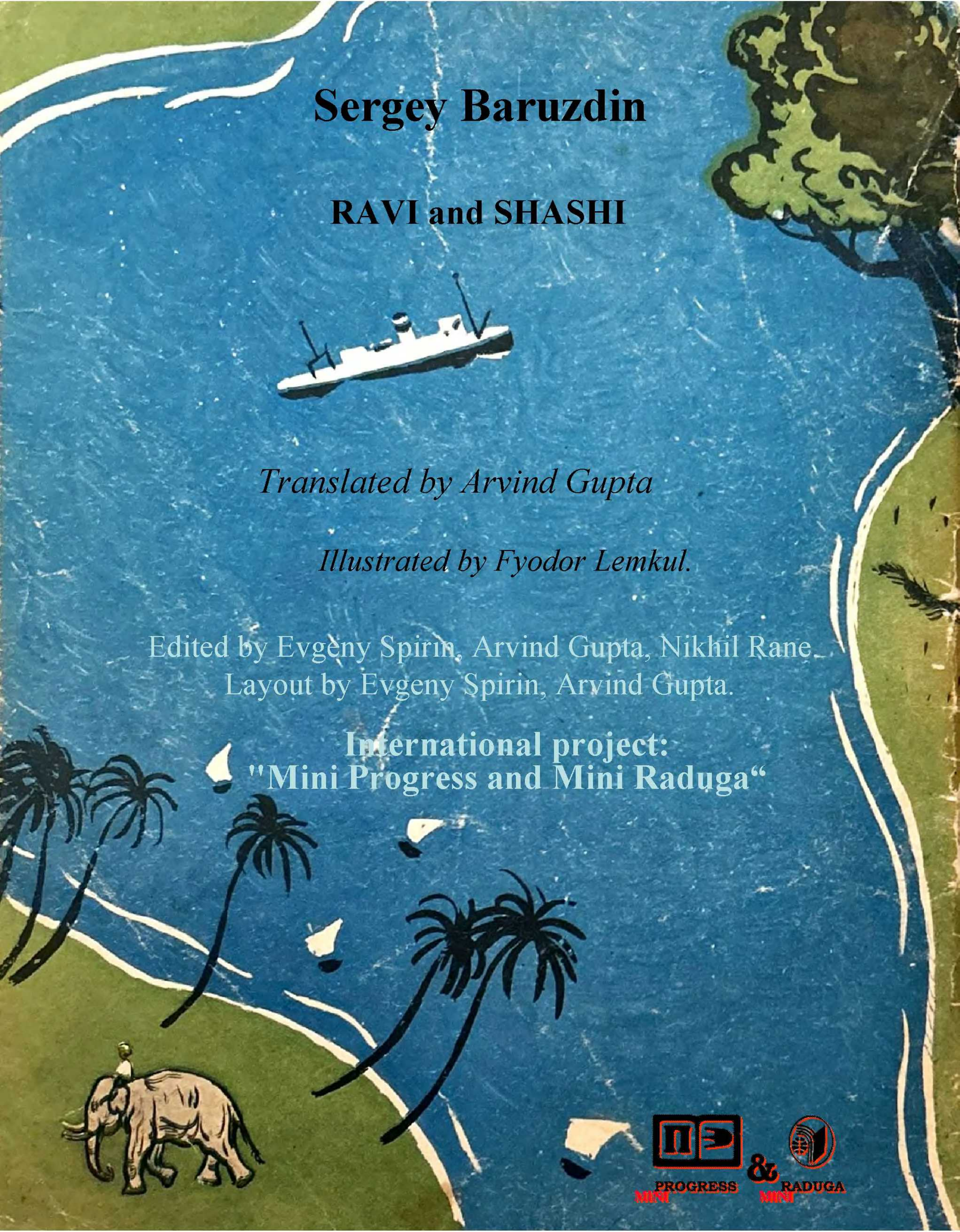
At this moment an unexpected incident happened.

Ravi and Shashi turned towards them and started shaking their trunks.

"Look! Look! They recognized us, they recognized us!" Sokolov shouted in joy.

The sailors were filled with joy. And joy also spread to all those who were standing around. And the Indian elephants Ravi and Shashi stood happily shaking their trunks, as if they were greeting their old and new Soviet friends.





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RAVI and SHASHI

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